

In The Claims:

1. (currently amended) An isolated polynucleotide as set forth in comprising the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 encoding a γ -butyrobetaine hydroxylase.
2. (currently amended) An isolated recombinant vector comprising the gene polynucleotide of claim 1.
3. (currently amended) The isolated recombinant vector according to claim 2, which has accession number KCCM-10557 An isolated transformant transformed with the recombinant vector of claim 2.
4. (currently amended) An isolated transformed with a recombinant vector comprising the gene of claim 1. The isolated transformant according to claim 3, wherein said transformant is *Escherichia coli*.
5. (currently amended) The isolated transformant according to claim 4, which wherein said transformant is *Escherichia coli* DH5 α CJ2004 having accession number KCCM-10557.
6. (canceled)
7. (currently amended) A method of preparing L-carnitine, which comprises hydroxylating γ -butyrobetaine using the γ -butyrobetaine hydroxylase from a transformant transformed with a recombinant vector comprising a gene is selected from the group consisting of a polynucleotide as set forth in SEQ ID NO. 1 or a polynucleotide encoding a γ -butyrobetaine hydroxylase as set forth in SEQ ID NO.2
A method of preparing L-carnitine, comprising:
 - a) cultivating the transformant of claim 3 in a culture medium;
 - b) obtaining a protein crude extract comprising γ -butyrobetaine hydroxylase from the culture medium;
 - c) incubating said protein crude extract and γ -butyrobetaine in a reaction buffer;

and

d) collecting L-carnitine from the reaction buffer.

8. (previously presented) The method of preparing L-carnitine according to claim 6, wherein the transformant is *Escherichia coli*.

9. (currently amended) The method of preparing L-carnitine according to claim 6, wherein the ~~recombinant vector has transformant is~~ *Escherichia coli* DH5*a* CJ2004 having accession number KCCM-10557.